THE PLOTTER

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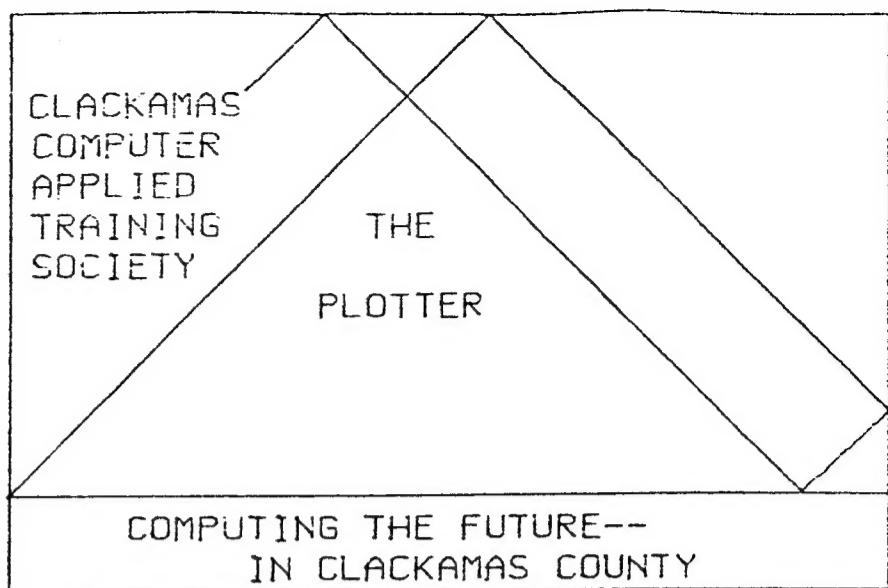
THE

PLOTTER

COMPUTING THE FUTURE--
IN CLACKAMAS COUNTY

MEETING

The JULY meeting will be:

on: SUN., JULY 17, 1994

MEETING   2:00 TO 5:00 P.M.
at: Rod Gowen's home
    14784 S. Quail Circle
    Oregon City

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS ISSUE:

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This issue devotes a fair amount of space to the word processor, MSCRIPT. Being fairly conversant with Jack Dohany's revisions I find it easy to write about. The early edition of it has surfaced again, possibly the original, as an MSDOS program. Do any of our readers know the history of this word processor? We would like to run an article on it.

We are pleasantly pleased with the orders received for our publication, THE BEST OF THE PLOTTER. We again include a purchase form for the convenience of our readers. Having the programs available on disk should be particularly inviting as we do have quite a few programs in our book.

At one time I had all of the programs on disk that I had printed in various issues. There was one disk that crashed and I was not able to retrieve any part of it. As I recall, I had a filled disk (Oliger SAFE format) and decided to erase several files. I guess there was no

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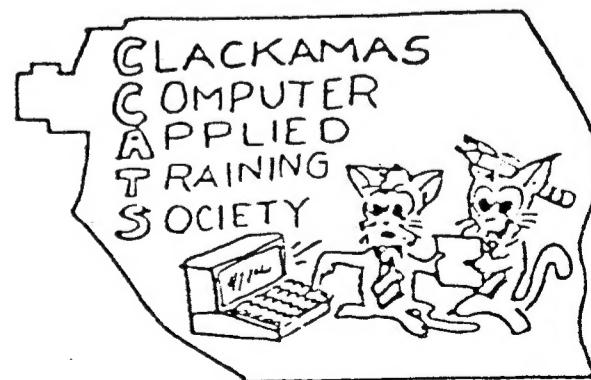
place for the files to be moved to as this system actually moves files when deletions are made. Live and learn!

I have several books on the subject of batch files for MSDOS. There is is one not in these books that is very handy, and that is named ONEPASS. Very nice for copying a disk to another disk without the hassel of switching disks to make copies as it makes a temporary file on the hard drive and then gives you the option to erase that file. It is an RMG production so write to Rod Gowen for details of availability.

One of these nights I will find time to produce our first page graphic of a plotted curve with TURBOCAD. Not having followed the tutor program all of the way through, I still have a lot to learn about this program. One of my sons is very conversant with TURBOCAD as he uses it in his machine shop business, so If I give up I can fall back on his help.

MSCRIPT WITH MSDOS!
Dick Wagner

Many of us made a choice years ago of using either TASWORD II or MSCRIPT for word processing on our 2068 computers. As I recall, I was the only member of our user group to use MSCRIPT on a continuing basis though I used TASWORD when forced to. Then when Jack Dohany developed his nice modifications to MSCRIPT we had a program that was hard to beat. How about up to 52 printer commands with 3 to 4 key strokes?

In this issue you will note that RMG Enterprises now carries MSCRIPT for IBM clone users. For some, the complexity of most of the clone word processors are just too much to conqueror just to do letters, memos and notes. MSCRIPT may well be the answer for you, particularly if you have been a past MSCRIPT user, and the price is right.

This is an early issue that may predate the MSCRIPT Word Processor manual published for the 2068 computer by Zebra Systems. However, a review of the various menus on screen and comparing with this manual show very few differences. This manual uses FUNCTION with macro keys but this is no problem as it seems to be replaced with the ALT key with the same macro keys.

The COMMAND menu is brought up with CTRL+ESC, the PRINT menu displays with ALT+P, and the EDITOR HELP menu displays with ALT+H. ESC returns to the editing screen from any menu except the main menu which displays only the window size as typing progresses (for the line being typed). The beauty of this is that one can scroll down the screens and determine page breaks by line number.

In many cases instructions are given once a particular function or command is selected so a manual is not an absolute requirement. As ZEBRA no longer provides these manuals, Jack Dohany is one source (maybe the only source). Some years ago I purchased a spare manual for $15.00 from him but there has probably been price changes since then.

For the uninitiated, printer codes are limited to a few built-in codes, such as underline and bold, and those that can be set up by the user. This appears to be rather restrictive as only 10 numbers can be used for codes and code parts such as ESC. Thus in many cases 2 or 3 digits are required for a code insert in the text. A marker is required before each code number so (for instance) the code for double strike (my printer) is ESC G, which is 27 71, and I would assigned 27 to 0 and 71 to 1. I will show the marker as @ so the printer will not double strike, so @0@1 is inserted in the text where required, or if the whole text is to be double strike it would be at the beginning of the first line.

While this system seems to be restrictive, the same 10 digits can be reassigned any number of times throughout the text in order to use other printer codes. One of Jack Dohany's improvements is to permit any of the 26 cap letters and 26 lower case letters to be assigned a printer code!

If the reader has used the 2068 computer MSCRIPT then that manual will serve your needs, along with the program from RMG Enterprises. Members of a user group can probably find an MSCRIPT manual among the membership.

MSCRIPT ON YOUR IBM CLONE?
by: Rod Gowen

YES! RMG has it in the shareware/PD library. The program was released in 1984 and is version 1.0 for DOS. The commands are almost identical to those that we saw in the 2068 version. There are no docs with it. But, from what I can tell, you can use the original manual.

If anyone is interested, just call or write RMG at the address on the back of this newsletter. PD disks in either 3.5" 720K or 5.25" 360K are just $3.50 postpaid.

LOST NEWSLETTER?

Dick F. Wagner

We recently had a returned newsletter, courtesy of the post office. Most of the mailing label and part of the page had been torn off, but the Expiration date: 10/94 was intact. Our record show that we have 3 subscribers with this expiration date. The missing issue is May, 1994, V 12, No. 5. If the subscriber who is the unfortunate victim of a postal machine will send us a card we will send the repaired issue plus cost of postage for the notice (a postal card, please).

PRINTER INK CLEANER
Dick Wagner

Those who have re-inked larger printer ribbons know that it is almost impossible to use re-inking equipment without getting ink on one or more fingers. Rod Gowen, RMG Enterprises, recommends using WD 40 lubricant as a hand cleaner.

Recently I had re-inked a 17+ yd ribbon for my Epson printer but neglected to clean up after the operation. So seeing this "uncleaned" equipment on my work bench I proceded to drain the plastic ink holder and in the process really blackened several fingers. The WD 40 was out of reach but I had a tube of hand cleaner near by used to clean up after working on the car. Being the experimental type I squirted a small amounf of GO-JO hand cleaner on the fingers and spread it around as it liquified. Wiping with a paper towel left my hands CLEAN. Further washing with detergent and water left my hands "dainty clean" and spotles!

This hand cleaner can usually be purchased at auto parts stores. Ask for GO-JO Industrial Stock #0906. According to the label of contents, which I finally got around to reading, it consists of Isoparaffins, Water, Mineral Oil, Soaps, Surfacants, Propylene Glycol, Aloe Extract, Biotin, Colors, Fragarance, Lanolin, Niacinamide, Petrolium, Preservatives, Vitamine E, & Wheat Germ Extract. Just compare that with WD 40 and see why it is so good. Priced about $1.00 for 5 fluid oz..

The directions state that GO-JO thoroughly and safely cleans (removes?): adhesive, asphalt, carbon, cement, graphite, grease, grime, mastic, paint, printer's ink, putty, shellac, stain, tar, & many more.

June 21, 1994

Rod:

Received "The Best of the Plotter" today and was very pleased
with it, a great "job well done" to all of you! You can see
from the inclosed order form that I would like to have the disk
with the prgrams on it. My system is:

                    LKDOS Format
                    3.5" disk
                    Single side - 80 track

Incidentally, I have never had a single problem with the DOS you
sold me so many years ago. That certainly attests to the
quality of merchandise you sell. My 2068 sits right along side
of my 386DX and I am just as apt to crank it up for a letter
such as this as the 386. In fact I usually do because it is so
much quicker.

Like you said in The Best of the Plotter it just doesn't seem
like 10 years have passed since we started out with the ZX-81. I
too have many fond memories of talking with you when I came up
with a problem and otherwise, it seems like yesterday. I still
subscribe to Sinc-Link and Update and enjoy reading their
publications. I'm convinced we are all better off for having had
our "Basic" to cut our teeth on, I know I was just because it
was so simple and simple was what I needed!

Again, thanks for a job well done and more thanks for sticking
in there with RMG when we needed you.

Sincerely,

Jim

Jim

        We like this kind of a testimonial, but we also
appreciate that some purchasers of our book will find fault
with some part of it. We know it is not perfect, but we did
not photo copy old issues--every part has been retyped, both
text and programs, or in some cases down loaded from hard
drives where a file was still available. This has lead to a
few typo errors, misspelled word, etc.

                                    The Editor

G. LANGUAGE

In spite of what experience may have shown, the choice of language is not a big deal. The choice of a particular language implementation IS! For example, standard BASIC has some big problems: (1), in order for someone else to use your program, he or she must have the same version of BASIC that you used to write the program; (2) standard BASIC is SLOW; (3) standard BASIC uses a lot of memory for even small programs; (4) usually, with every line required to have a line number and a limited range of line numbers, program size is very limited without some sort of CHAINing capability. On the other hand, compiled BASIC (such as MicroSoft Quick Basic) produces compiled code which (1) does not require BASIC to run on a computer; (2) is pretty fast; (3) uses much less memory in the completed program; (4) is much more lenient on line number requirements.

Thus, it tends to be more important WHICH BASIC, Pascal, C, forth, etc. is used, rather than the choice of BASIC vs Pascal vs C, etc. There is, of course, a learning cost if one wants to change languages, or even implementations of an already familiar language. The learning cost for a language change is much higher, and except for very complex designs, is frequently not worth the effort.

That having been said, also be aware that some languages keep you from being able to do many things possible in other languages. For example, manipulation of screen bitmap (say, for game sprites or other symbols) may be very much harder in one language than another. BASIC is historically weak on graphics but very good on math (that is what it was designed for!) C is now the language of choice where you want to get the maximum power of the computer. The learning process for C, however, is challenging. There are some versions of C which are pretty inexpensive (comparable to BASIC); either MS Quick-C or Borland TurboC are in the $85 area.

H. DEVELOP RESOURCES

One of the very helpful things one can do to simplify program writing and to improve the reliability of programs is to develop your own set of program resources. Here, the "resource" is intended to refer to a piece of code which can be u   in a variety of programs. The idea is that once you have the resources deve   D, they can be used over and over with confidence. The program writing the   ster, testing is faster, and the reliability of the result should be better. This is par of the idea of bottom-up programming. Here are some common things which reusable resources might make sense:

1. HELLO screens for program startup
2. Serial i/o
3. Serial port initialization (com port, baud rate, etc)
4. "Dialog" boxes for entering a small amount of information. A dialog box usually pops up on the screen, requesting some sort of input. It may be a warning (such as a disconnected serial cable or a missing disk file) or it may be a request to enter the operators key choice for a particular function. Dialog boxes are usually drawn with a border, some explanatory text, and provision for some sort of key entry. It is very desirable to save what was there on the screen before the dialog was shown so that the screen can be put back into that condition after the dialog is finished.
5. Menus of all kinds
6. Help access.

I. PROGRAM STYLE AND KIND OF COMPUTER

The kind of computer (and its hardware resources) have very little to do the the programming style you use. The style things mentioned here work as well for small computers as they do for large ones.

That said, if you want to write a program which really does something, forget about toys. Sure, some people get a big kick out of playing with flint-lock rifles. But anyone who wants to shoot accurately and with good repeatibility will use a modern one. The same goes for computers. If you are programming for your own amusement, then maybe a toy is fine. But if you want to do something which others can use, which people will say "wow, I like that", focus on a PC or a Mac! The facts are that unless your program is a special thing which really takes very little code to make something fantastic happen, programs take memory! And they usually take more than BASIC!

—NOTICE—

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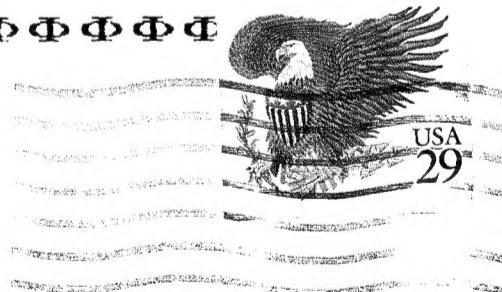
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